

THE LAST GAMBLE Vassal Module

This Vassal module was developed by Kevin S. Conway and Richard A. Hoffman to provide a graphic, virtual depiction of game play for *The Last Gamble – The Ardennes Offensive, December 1944 - Designer Signature Edition* (Compass Games, 2023). The module contains standard Vassal functionality that is further tailored to the game’s rule structure. The release edition is current to Vassal version **3.7.16**. All units, player aids and scenario cards are current with the “TLG Corrections and Clarifications 5-1-2025.”

The freeware Vassal program and support documentation are here: <https://vassalengine.org/>.

The Vassal User Guide is here: <https://obj.vassalengine.org/images/8/8c/Userguide.pdf>

The current (**V1.3**) TLG DSE Vassel module is here:

[https://vassalengine.org/library/projects/The Last Gamble The Ardennes Offensive December 1944 %E2%80%93 Designer Signature Edition](https://vassalengine.org/library/projects/The%20Last%20Gamble%20The%20Ardennes%20Offensive%20December%201944%20Designer%20Signature%20Edition)

The TLG DSE Welcome screen provides three “Select play mode” options:



- “Start a new game offline” opens the “Select setup” drop-down menu to launch the one-map *Battle Before the Meuse* scenario or the two-map *Wacht Am Rhein*, *The Last Blitzkrieg*, *Das Eisen Schmieden* and *22 December – High Water Mark of the Battle of the Bulge* scenarios. You may also open an empty half-map or full-map to design your own setup.
- “Look for a game online” opens the Vassal “Active Game Rooms” window for connecting to an online game server. For help, see the VASSAL Forum at <https://forum.vassalengine.org>
- “Load saved game” opens your file directory to select a Setup File for a new scenario, a Vassal Saved Game file or a Vassal Game Log file for games in progress.
- Press “Finish” to open your chosen game.

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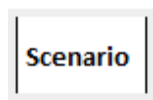
The left side of the main menu bar contains standard Vassal buttons for “Undo”, “Step Forward”, “Active Game Rooms”, “Retire”, a “One-die”, Two-dice” and “Three-dice” random dice-roll buttons.



The right side of the main menu bar contains standard Vassal buttons for “Save Map as PNG Image” button, three map re-sizing buttons (Increase Zoom, Decrease Zoom, Fit Screen), a “Hide all pieces on this map” button and a “Mov” button that will turn off all active “Moved” unit flags on the map.



The “Units” button opens a menu that contains all of the U.S., Allied (British, French and Belgian) and German unit counters that are further sub-divided by unit type (Armor, Artillery, Infantry, Engineers, HQs and Air), and all game markers that apply to units, map conditions and the scenario game status cards.

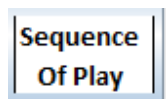


The “Scenario” button opens a sub-menu to select the scenario you wish to play. The named scenario sub-menu contains all of the charts that apply to that scenario to include:

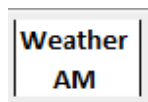
- Turn Record (Game Status) that has moveable markers to track current game conditions.
- Victory Conditions
- Ground Order of Appearance where unit counters can be placed from the “Units” menu.
- Air Order of Appearance where unit counters can be placed from the “Units” menu.
- Notes cards for each nationality that regulate unit setup, arrival and play restrictions.
- Temporary Rules charts that show which game rules and notes are active each turn.



Certain hexes on the *Battle Before the Meuse* and *Wacht Am Rhein* maps contain small stars or crosses at the top. Right-clicking these allows a player to change the “Settlement Control” of the hex during the game. The “VP Display” button opens a sub-menu that shows the current number of “Settlement Control” victory points for each side.



The “Sequence Of Play” button opens the Sequence Of Play chart that regulates game play and lists game rule references (e.g. 1.0 WEATHER PHASE).



The “Weather AM” button opens the Weather Tables card that adjusts weather and ground conditions on daytime (AM) game turns using either the Historical Weather Table (1.1 – 1.2) or the Uncertain Weather Table (11.1).



The “Supply AM” button opens the player aid card that adjusts unit supply conditions on daytime (AM) game turns using the German Fuel Capture Table (2.5), German Fuel Shortages Table (2.6) and optional Fuel Dump Demolition Table (11.3.2).

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Replacement AM

The “Replacement AM” button opens an active sub-menu where “eliminated” ground unit counters are sent to the “Divisional Replacement Depot” or “Permanently Dead Pile” during game play. Division-level armor and infantry units that can be “Replaced” may also be moved from here to the Game Status Card during the Replacement Phase on daytime (AM) game turns (3.4).

Air AM/PM

The “Air AM/PM” button opens an active “Air Box” sub-menu where air units can be automatically moved from their Air Order of Appearance cards (using the “Send to Air Allocation Map” function [4.1]) and then moved (dragged and dropped) down the card for assignment to various air missions (4.2 – 4.6) and onto the map. The Air Attack / Air Interdiction Table is included below the Air Box to adjudicate activities that occur in the Air Phase on daytime (AM) or nighttime (PM) game turns (4.5, 4.6).

Movement AM/PM

The “Movement AM/PM” button opens a sub-menu that contains all of the player aids used in the Movement Phase (5.0) during daytime (AM) and nighttime (PM) game turns. These include the Terrain Effects Chart, Movement Modifications Chart, Bridge Tables chart (Bridge Demolition Table [5.2.6.3], Bridge Interdiction Fire [7.7.3], Ouren Bridge Uncertainty [10.5.2] and Bridge Discovery Table [11.12]), Zone of Control (ZOC) Chart and the Terrain images chart.

Reaction AM/PM

The “Movement AM/PM” button opens a sub-menu that contains all of the player aids used in the Movement Phase (5.0) during daytime (AM) and nighttime (PM) game turns. These include the Terrain Effects Chart, Movement Modifications Chart, Bridge Tables chart (Bridge Demolition Table [5.2.6.3], Bridge Interdiction Fire [7.7.3], Ouren Bridge Uncertainty [10.5.2] and Bridge Discovery Table [11.12]), Zone of Control (ZOC) Chart and the Terrain images chart.

Combat AM/PM

The “Combat AM/PM” button opens a sub-menu that contains all of the player aids used in the Combat Phase (7.0) during daytime (AM) and nighttime (PM) game turns. These include the Combat Modification Chart, Combat Modification Tables (Combined Arms Table [7.5.1], Armor Superiority Table [7.5.2], Combat Coordination Table [7.4] and Close Air Support Tables [7.8.1 and 7.8.2]), the Artillery Modification Table (7.7) and the Combat Results Table (7.10).

Exploitation AM/PM

The “Exploitation AM/PM” button opens a sub-menu with the player aids used for reserve movement and reserve combat in the Exploitation Phase (8.0) during daytime (AM) and nighttime (PM) game turns. These include all of the player aids behind the “Movement AM/PM” and “Combat AM/PM” buttons.

Engineer AM/PM

The “Engineer AM/PM” button opens a small sub-menu that lists the three activities conducted in the Engineer Phase during the daytime (AM) and nighttime (PM) game turns. These include Complete Bridge Construction (9.1), Build/Complete Improved Positions (9.2) and Build Roadblocks (9.3).

Clean Up AM/PM

The “Clean Up AM/PM” button opens a sub-menu with the Game Markers Chart that regulates the placement and removal of all game markers. It also contains two active buttons that will turn off various active unit “flags” at the end of daytime (AM) and nighttime (PM) game turns.

UNIT ACTIVITY FLAGS AND SYMBOLS

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All ground units have activity flags and symbols that can be turned “On/Off” to denote their current status. The flag and activity menus are displayed by right-clicking the unit counter and the options displayed correspond to the activities that unit type may conduct.

The unit flags are abbreviated and color-coded, with movement associated activities on the right side of the unit counter and combat associated activities on the left-side of the unit counter. These flags with their rule references include:

- Moved (Red – Moved – 5.1)
- Form Kampfgruppe / Join Task Force (Light Blue – KG / TF – 5.3.1, 5.3.2)
- Enemy Reaction Movement (Purple - Reaction - 6.0)
- Retreat (Yellow – RET – 7.11)
- Advance After Combat (Blue-Grey – ADV – 7.12)
- Conduct Barrage Attack (Artillery – Grey – BAR – 7.7.4)
- Fire Support (Artillery – Grey – FS – 7.7.5, 7.7.6)
- Show Artillery Range (Artillery – green highlighted hexes – 7.7.1)
- Conduct Time-On-Target Fire (Allied artillery – Red – TOT – 11.20)

Unit menu commands can manipulate a unit counter. These commands and their rule references include:

- Rotate Unit Clockwise (CW) or Counterclockwise (CCW) – (Game Aid Table)
- Restore Unit to Full-strength (flip to front [full-strength] side - 3.3)
- Unit Moving (Tube Artillery – flip to back [Moved] side – 5.3.3)
- Unit Deployed (Tube Artillery – flip to front side – 5.3.3)
- Unit Step Loss (flip to back [reduced-strength] side – 7.10)
- Alternate HQ (HQ - flip to back [Alternate] side – 11.14.6)
- Eliminated (move to Division Replacement Depot or Permanently Dead Pile – 7.10)

GAME MARKERS

Unit menus can place game markers on a unit to indicate its temporary status. Active game markers may be rotated or deleted using a right-click menu on the game marker. Unit markers with their rule references include:

- Unsupplied (2.4)
- Isolated (2.8)
- Disrupted – Air Attack (FB/LB air units, 4.6.3)
- Enter Strategic Movement (5.1.3)
- Fatigued/Resting (5.1.5)
- Blow Bridge (5.2.6.3)
- Enter Combat Reserve (5.4)
- Enter Exploitation Reserve (5.4)
- Conduct Ground Attack (Red Arrow, 7.0 – 7.10)
- Reserve Attack (Yellow Arrow, 8.3)
- Engaged (7.10.6)
- Disorganized/Regrouping (7.10.8)
- Build Light Bridge (9.1)
- Build/Complete Improved Position (9.2)

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Unit menus can place game markers on the map to indicate movement or combat conditions. Map markers with their rule references include:

- Air Interdicted (MB/HB/SB air units, 4.5)
- Bridge Interdiction (Allied artillery units, 7.7.3)
- Roadblock/Cleared (9.3)
- Time-On-Target Fire (Allied artillery units, 11.20)

Lastly, a “Movement Trail” may be turned on/off that will draw a colored line in the wake of a unit’s movement. The colors are:

- GREEN for non-motorized infantry and commando units that have the best mobility.
- YELLOW for light armor, armored infantry/panzergrenadier and rocket artillery (Nebelwerfer) units that have slightly limited mobility.
- RED for medium and heavy armor, tube artillery, Flak/AAA and Anti-Tank units that have highly restricted mobility.
- PURPLE for headquarters units that can freely move through other units.
- WHITE for engineer units that use specialized movement during the Engineer Phase.

This list is not exhaustive and any discrepancy between this introduction guide and the game rules should be settled in favor of the game rules.

The setup files in the module have the German Brüko heavy bridge markers and HQ and Commando unit counters on the Order of Appearance cards. The former may be dragged to the map when built and the latter can be dragged to the map if you’re playing the optional Headquarters (11.15) or Command (11.16) rules.

The best way to learn the TLG Vassal module is to first use it during solo play and then in a live-play setting online. An important usage tip is to keep your setup files and play files in separate directories.

Enjoy!

Rich Hoffman

12 September, 2025